HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PERRY COUNTY JAIL

Records show that planning for the Perry County jail began on September 20, 1866 when a tax levy of two mills on the dollar would be placed on all taxable property in the county for the purpose of building a common jail in the town of Pinckneyville.

Further records show that on May 18th, 1871 a contract for construction of the jail was given to E. Haugh of Indianapolis, Indiana. Plans and specifications called for an expenditure of $14,150 to be paid in monthly installments as the work progressed. The contract was secured by a bond of $15,000.

Payments were made monthly as promised and final payment was made to E. Haugh in December of 1871. The county had borrowed $11,000 from the Belleville Savings Bank of Belleville with 10 percent interest due semiannually. The total loan was to be paid back in two years.

The historic jail housed prisoners until 1985 when a new jail was built to meet modern specifications. The building also housed many sheriffs during the interim period.

The building is an example of the fine architecture of the day. It is made of locally kilned red brick and the structure sits on a sandstone foundation. The walls are three bricks thick. It has white soffits and some gingerbread trim. The building was occupied until the spring of 1993 when government offices housed there moved to a new location..

A lot of interesting history occured in the jail. One young man from Tamaroa was hanged there in about 1883. Two other men were scheduled to hang but were exonerated. The stairsteps leading up to the hangman's scaffold are still visible in one wall.

Jailbreaks were attempted there. One man sawed the bars of his cell and another one scooped mortar out of the bricks with a teaspoon. A wedding was also held in the jail in 1910 when a young sheriff married his bride there.

Few changes have been made in the exterior of the jail. A porch on the west side of the kitchen has been removed. A chimney toppled to the ground and left a gaping hole in the south end of the wall. This will be repaired with matching brick and mortar. There are a few loose bricks but the building stands firm and should last another 50 to 60 years according to a construction engineer.

In 1972, the interior was modernized. Paneling was added to the walls, leaving the woodwork and walls underneath intact. Fireplaces were painted to match the walls, but all this will be put back to its original condition. Former sheriffs who lived there are serving as advisers. We are also getting artifacts from former sheriffs to include in a museum which we think holds great promise.

The cell block contains cells for eight male prisoners. The walls are covered with artwork done by the prisoner occupants. This will all be saved. Women prisoners were kept in a large dormitory room in the house. It was unusual for county prisons to provide for female prisoners, making this a unique jail.

The historic Perry County jail was built in 1871 at a cost of $14,500. It housed Perry County prisoners until 1985 when a new jail was built. The building also provided living quarters for many sheriffs in the interim period.

The building is typical of the fine architecture of the day. It is made of locally kilned red brick and the structure sits on a sandstone foundation. The walls are three bricks thick. It has white soffits and some gingerbread trim. The building was used as an auxilliary office for the county government and for storage until this spring.(1993)

A lot of history has happened in the jail. A thirty year old man from Tamaroa was hanged there in the 1880's. Two other men were scheduled to hang there, but were exonerated. The stairway leading up to the hangman's platform is still outlined in one wall of the building.

Jail breaks were attempted there. One man sawed off bars to his cell and another man used a teaspoon to scoop out mortar between the bricks. A wedding was also performed in the jail in 1910 when a young sheriff took his bride there.

Few changes have been made in the exterior of the building. One chimney has toppled to the ground exposing a hole in the roof. This will be repaired with matching brick and mortar. There are a few loose bricks but the building is firm and should stand another 50 to 60 years according to a construction engineer.

Much of the original interior is intact. The paneling that was added in 1970 was put on over wall-papered walls, leaving the wood work intact. Fireplaces were painted to match the walls but these can be restored.

There are no other buildings of this era or such grandeur in that vicinity. The preservation committee hopes to preserve the architecture and maintain the building as a museum.

The cell block area has some interesting artwork, done by prisoners on the walls of the cells. This will be preserved and artifacts from each sheriff's era put on display. The main emphasis will be on an exhibit of coal mining equipment and history since Perry County leads all Illinois counties in the production of coal. Pinckneyville is on the "Black Diamond Trail" which enabled coal haulers to transport coal from the southern Illinois mines to the county seat towns in the counties to the north. The jail is just a stone's throw from this historic trail named for the black diamond... coal. We anticipate that other counties along the Black Diamond Trail will list their properties with the National Reistry of Historic Places.

A STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

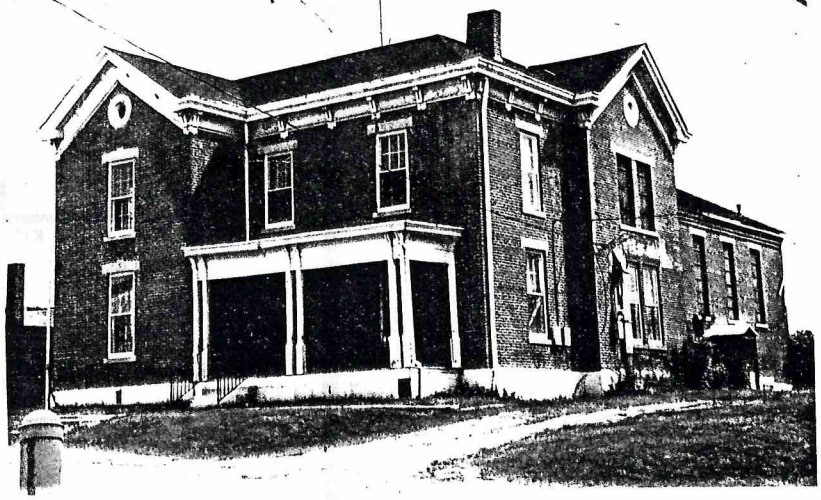
If one missed seeing the bars on the back windows, a drive-by viewing of the building would put it in the category of a post Civil War mansion. The architecture relates it to that period. There are no similar buildings of that era in the town, and, few, if any, in the county. That is why it is so important to the history buffs and pioneer family descendants to preserve this building.

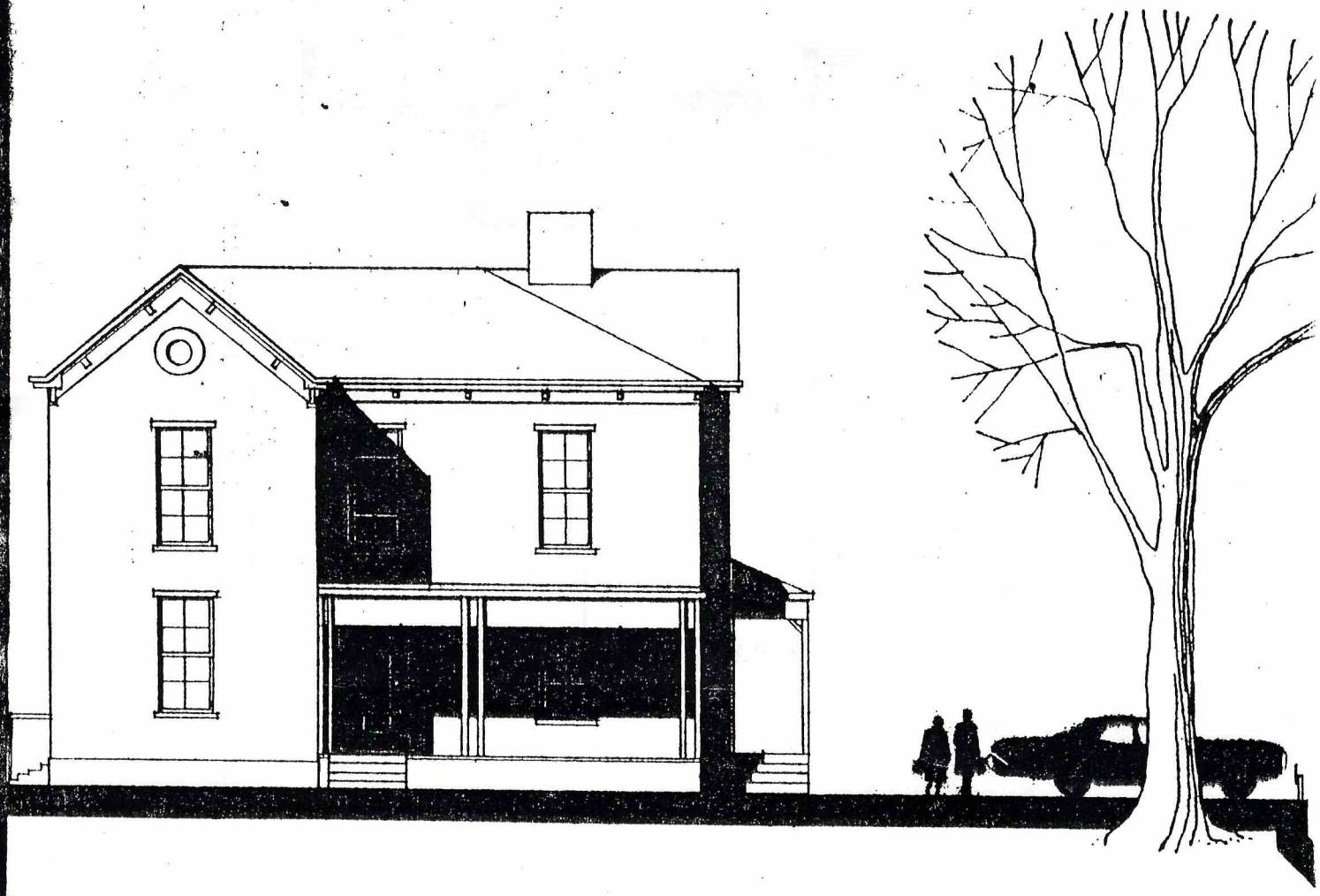
Very little has been done to change the exterior of the building. Necessary repairs will be made. The interior changes that have taken place will be rectified by removing the wall paneling and one wall that was added to divide the woman's dormitory into two rooms. The carpeting will be removed from the floors and the wide boards re-finished.

Community support is evident in donations of both money and labor. The Historical Society appointed a steering committee to collect money for repairs and to begin the initial work of developing a museum. Both the county and city government officials are supporting the project.

One area of emphasis in the museum will pertain to coal mining since Perry County continues to lead all counties in the state in the production of coal. The Department of Mines and Minerals has a magnificent display of model mines and memorabilia which will be housed in the museum. Pinckneyville is on the "Black Diamond Trail" and the jail is a stone's throw from that trail which is now Illinois Route #127. The road was built to transport coal from the mines of southern Illinois to the county seat towns to the north. We anticipate that other counties on the Black Diamond Trail will list their historic properties on the National Registry, and that festivals and celebrations will be held to keep this part of our Illinois history alive.

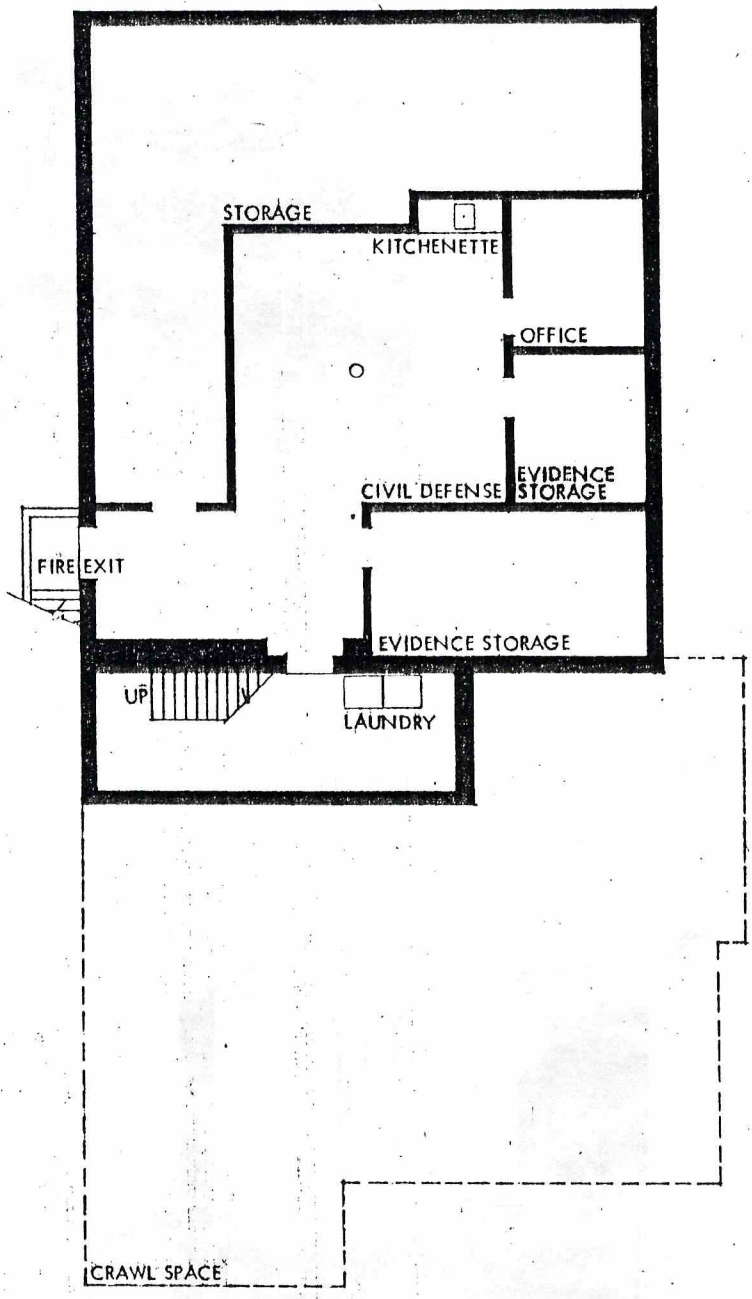
We will appreciate your support in accepting the Perry County jail as a place on The National Registry of Historic Places. You can make our dreams come true.



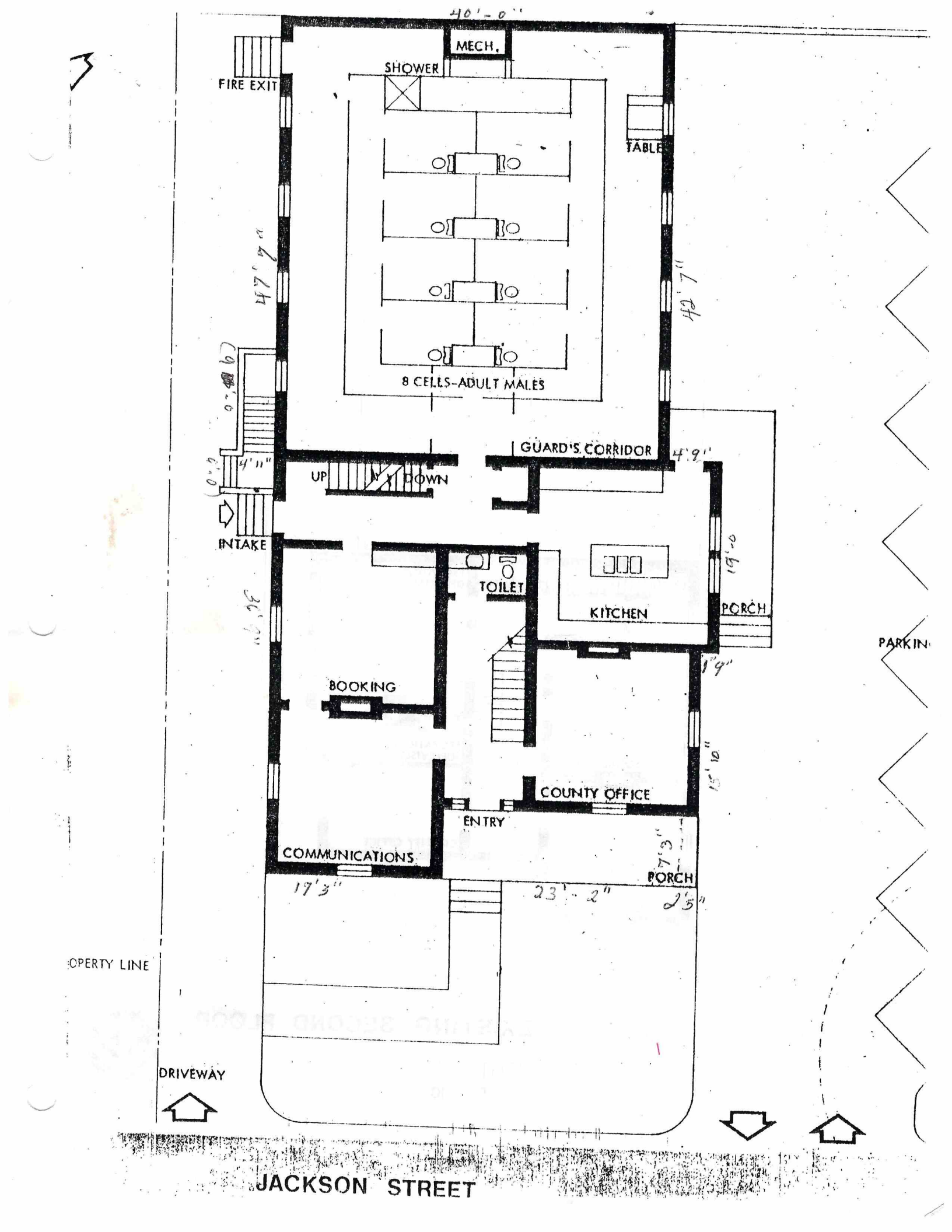


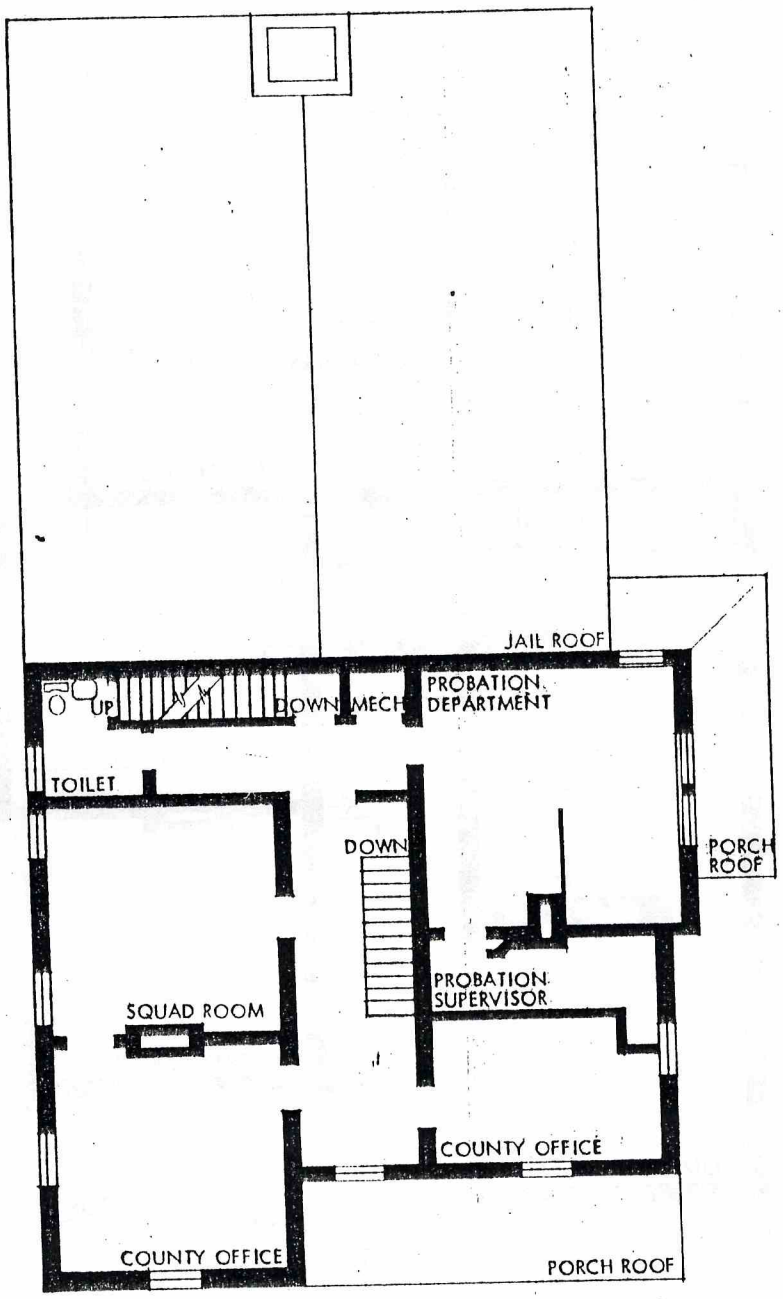
NORTH ELEVATION

0 5 10 15 20 25


STORAGE
KITCHENETTE
OFFICE
CIVIL DEFENSE
EVIDENCE STORAGE
FIRE EXIT
EVIDENCE STORAGE
UP
LAUNDRY
CRAWL SPACE

BASEMENT


40'-0"
MECH.
SHOWER
FIRE EXIT
TABLE
47'7"
42'7"
8 CELLS-ADULT MALES
GUARD'S CORRIDOR
4'9"
4'11"
UP
DOWN
INTAKE
TOILET
KITCHEN
19'-0
PORCH
PARKIN
BOOKING
15'10"
COUNTY OFFICE
ENTRY
COMMUNICATIONS
7'3"
PORCH
17'3"
23'-2"
2'5"
OPERTY LINE
DRIVEWAY
JACKSON STREET



EXISTING SECOND FLOOR

0 5 10 15 20 25

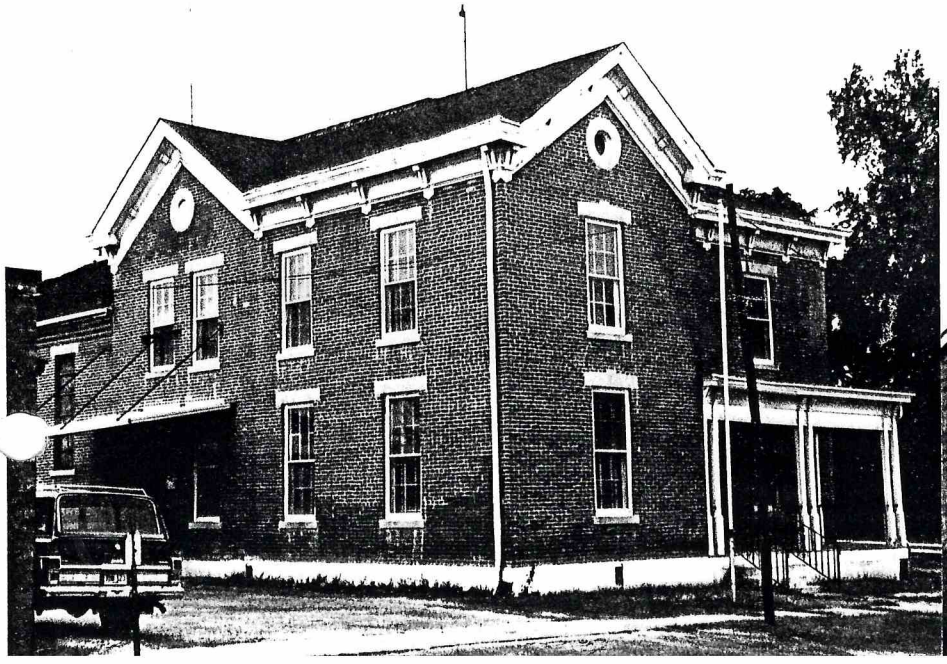
The first Perry County jail was built in 1833-1834, brick, one room above another, 14 x 16 feet, cost $750. In 1866, a tax of 2 mills per dollar was levied for the new jail. In 1870 a 3 mill tax was levied. In May 1871, a contract was let for $14,150 to build a new jail. Thomas Turner bought the old jail for $15. A jail tax of 40 cents per $100 was levied in Aug. ,1871.

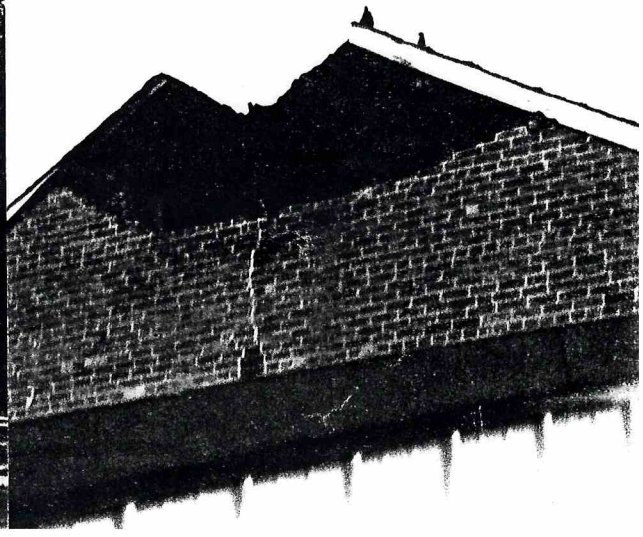
The new jail was built 2 blocks west of the courthouse at the rear of a 2 story brick residence for the sheriff. There were 8 cells in a double row, a corridor all around the cells, boiler-iron floors, 8 windows, a $200 furnace, bathtub, wash basins, wooden water tank in the attic, and a privy seat in the corridor.

Females were to be in a cell on the top story of the sheriff's residence in a large cell.

(As I told you, Bill, I have no idea where I got this information ages ago. Hope it helps.)

Mar. 18, 1993





SHERIFFS OF PERRY COUNTY

Samuel D. Hiller.....	1986 -	Thomas H. Thimming	1918 - 1922
Jerry Woolsey.....	1978 - 1986	J. Quinn Charlton...	1914 - 1918
Eddie Rainwater.....	1970 - 1978	Samuel T. Duncan...	1910 - 1914
Norman Brostmeyer.	1966 - 1970	Dempsey Winthrop..	1906 - 1910
John Barber.....	1962 - 1966	Henry R. Winthrop..	1902 - 1906
Tom O'Keefe.....	1958 - 1962	John J. King.....	1896 - 1902
Joe Shirk.....	1954 - 1958	John S. Winthrop....	1894 - 1896
Craig Templeton....	1950 - 1954	George W. Clark....	1890 - 1894
Tom O'Keefe.....	1946 - 1950	Thomas Penwarden..	1886 - 1890
Emil (Buck) Boquillon	1942 - 1946	Ralph G. Williams...	1882 - 1886
Howard W. Lee.....	1938 - 1942	Thomas Penwarden..	1880 - 1882
Robert J. Ozburn....	1934 - 1938	Edwin M. Harriss...	1876 - 1880
Albert C. Davis.....	1930 - 1934	Leonard T. Ross....	1872 - 1876
Thomas H. Thimming	1926 - 1930	Samuel A. Baird....	1870 - 1872
Albert C. Davis.....	1922 - 1926		

Thomas Penwarden 1880-1882
Edwin M. Harriss 1876-1880
Leonard T. Ross 1872-1876
Samuel A. Baird 1870-1872
Daniel W. Dry 1868-1870
J. Carroll Harriss 1866-1868
William C. Leslie 1864-1866
James F. Mason 1862-1864
Albert A. Clymer 1860-1862
James J. Hoge 1858-1860
David M. Hoge 1856-1858
John D. Reese 1854-1856
David M. Hoge 1852-1854
John W. Pyatt 1850-1852
David M. Hoge 1846-1850
Laban C. Jones 1844-1846
Abner K. Pyle 1843-1844
John Steele 1840-1843
Matthew Jones 1836-1840
William C. Murphy 1827-1836

Perry County Treasurers

Until 1971 The County Treasurer Was Also The County Assessor

Frank L. Mangin 1981-
Wm. C. Heisner ..... (First to succeed himself) 1970-1981
John Barber 1966-1970
Ruben Eisen 1962-1966
Joe Shirk 1958-1962
Theodore Croessman 1954-1958
E. J. McElvain 1950-1954
Theodore Croessman 1946-1950
T. Lewis Wood 1942-1946
James W. Cunningham 1938-1942
George A. Miller 1936-1938
Linnie A. Blackburn 1935-1936
W. A. Blackburn 1934-1935